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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

28 October 1980

MEMORANDUM

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Cuba: Capabilities for Military Intervention in Nicaragua

Cuba is capable of deploying approximately 800-1,000 airborne troops to Nicaragua in less than 24 hours.

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- The Cuban Air Force has available 20 AN-26 (CURL) twin engine turbo prop transport aircraft. Each AN-26 can carry 40 fully armed combat troops. Carrying such a load, the AN-26 is capable of flying to any point in Nicaragua and returning to Cuba without refueling. The aircraft can land at unimproved fields or paradrop airborne troops directly over a given target.

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- The Cuban Air Force also has at least 1,000 paratroopers from the Landing and Assault Forces which could be dispatched along with or immediately after the Interior Ministry's "special troops."

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Cuba also has available 5 IL-62 passenger jet aircraft which can carry about 200 passengers each, but require an improved runway. They are capable of landing at a major airfield in Nicaragua

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and returning to Cuba without refueling. In addition, the following aircraft, in either the Cuban Air Force or the Cuban national airline, could be used to support a Cuban military operation in Nicaragua: three BB-318 (Bristol Britannia) passenger/cargo aircraft each with a capacity of 100 troops; four IL-18 (COOT) with a capacity of 95; at least ten AN-24 (COKE) with a capacity of 40 to 50; at least two AN-30 (CLANK) with a capacity of 40 to 50; and at least twelve YAK-40 (CODLING) with a capacity of 25 troops. Only the BB-318 Bristol Britannias and the IL-18 COOT aircraft, however, could make the flight to Nicaragua and back without refueling.

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The current estimated strength of the Cuban ground forces is 180,000, with a ready reserve strength of 60,000 personnel. In the event of mobilization, a call-up of all reserves and an integration of all para-military forces could increase the size of the ground forces to 700,000.

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The Cubans have an efficient and extensive call-up system that mobilizes ready reservists within 2-4 hours at the local level.

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Cuban forces lack sufficient air and naval transport capabilities for deployment of large numbers of troops on a full scale endeavor, but are easily capable of sustaining a limited operation with specific objectives.

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### Conclusion

We believe that the Cubans are capable of dropping 800-1,000 men in Nicaragua to seize a limited objective; i.e., an airport, within 24 hours. Another 1,000 troops could then be deployed within three and a half hours after a landing strip was secured.

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